

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number Various

Page 19

NAME: Dunn County Courthouse

LOCATION: Owens Street, bounded West by Manning Avenue and north and east by
vacated streets, Manning, North Dakota 038, Dunn County 025

OWNER: Dunn County, Manning, North Dakota

ACREAGE: 2.065 Acres

VBD (LEGAL): Block 1, Original Plat of Manning

UTM: Zone 13, Easting = 668850, Northing = 5233060; Manning, N. Dak. Quad.

DESCRIPTION: The Dunn County courthouse is a simple residential-like structure with two additions, four dormers, and a southward-facing entryway porch. Wood frame serves as the support system and horizontal metal siding covers exterior walls. The foundation and basement walls are poured concrete. Hipped roofs and asphalt shingles cover the dormers and the main building. The jail addition is flat roofed, of masonry construction, and has had a recent application of stucco. Paired 1-over-1 hung windows puncture the main (south) facade and the dormers have three 1-over-1 windows. The entryway has a gable roof and wooden double doors, each with 1-over-1 fixed windows and double panels.

The interior of the courthouse retains its original character and finishes with the exception of a dropped ceiling. The hall-and-flanking-room plan, common in multi-office buildings, has been preserved despite the growth in the number of services offered by the county. The narrow hallway and woodwork are readily visible. The second floor, originally housing a courtroom, is presently used as a sheriff's residence. Currently the county courtroom is located in a building in the nearby town of Killdeer. The interior plan and appearance of the courthouse exhibit an integrity of design, materials, and historic feeling which contributes to its possession of integrity of historic associations.

Many alterations have taken place in the building's history. Earliest was the ca. 1920 addition of a 30'x 48' jail on the north of the original 48'x 48' building. In 1964 aluminum siding was added to the exterior of the original courthouse block, while the jail retained its masonry exterior. The new siding covered the building's original metal siding which was pressed to give the appearance of concrete block construction (see photograph 2). The historic siding survives beneath the exterior siding. Also in 1964 the original shed roof entryway was replaced with the present gable roofed entryway. In 1980 a 22'x 44' addition was placed east of the original building block to provide extra space for offices. This addition has fewer windows than the original building block, a flat deck and wood rail for a roof, and exposes its foundation at a higher level than the original building. The addition has metal siding which matches the siding on the original building. Despite the changes in plan and exterior treatment, the windows have remained the same on the courthouse.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received FEB 12 1985

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number Various

Page 20

The site contains a proliferation of deciduous trees, an architecturally undistinguished and noncontributing 12'x 18' frame storage shed, and a post-and-chain retaining barrier which marks the boundary between the grounds and vehicular spaces. The building is of average size among others in Manning, a town of 42 people (1980 census).

SIGNIFICANCE: Date: 1915

Architect: Arnt Ree
Contractor: Davis and Son

The Dunn County courthouse has been altered to such an extent that it has lost the qualities which would make it eligible to the National Register under Criterion C. Its architectural significance has been compromised, lacking integrity of design due to additions and application of metal siding. The building does retain an integrity of feeling and historic association, however, the latter which makes it eligible under Criterion A.

Architecturally, the building gives three-dimensional evidence of the state's courthouse building tradition practiced west of the Missouri River in which mass produced plans for dwelling-like buildings were adapted for use as county offices. Among North Dakota's 53 counties, 14 lie in the area west of the Missouri River, a barrier to early settlement. Counties there organized near or after 1900, a generation after many eastern North Dakota counties. The lack of architectural expertise and the need for governmental mechanisms led to the erection of buildings with materials and designs as were available at local lumberyards. The Dunn County courthouse in its original form typified this type of construction. Its modest scale, human-sized windows, lack of decoration, and casual design are more akin to contemporaneous dwellings in its area and less like courthouses in other parts of the state. The one atypical feature is the metal siding, an exterior material which was more common for commercial buildings.

On a small building such as the historic courthouses in the western part of the state, even minor alterations cause the fragile aesthetics to suffer. The effect of modern siding and a sizable addition is severe. As a result the building does not meet the definition of architectural significance founded upon integrity. Wide board siding was not common, possibly not available, so its present use on the courthouse marks a dramatic change in design.

There is, however, a considerable integrity of feeling from the original courthouse in the appearance of the present building. This integrity allows it to convey a visual character which contributes to an integrity of historic association necessary for eligibility under Criterion A. The integrity of feeling is made possible by the original courthouse design. Its relative simplicity and lack of applied ornament reduce the visual identity of the building to its essential structural members. In such simple designs, elemental components of the building, e.g., window/door placement, roof configuration, fenestration type, textures of wall planes, etc., are the features which distinguish a building. While the Dunn County courthouse does not possess

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received FEB 12 1986

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Various

Page 21

requisite integrity of exterior design to justify significance on architectural grounds, on balance it retains the majority of its original features. The building certainly is identifiable as the original (compare photographs 1 and 2) because the original window type and placement, dormer arrangement, point of ingress/egress, site orientation, relation to the other building on site, roof configuration, setting, and building location have remained unchanged. The elements which have changed are superficial (spatially, not in importance), i.e., surface treatments and noticeable additions. The net effect is a building whose essence is intact and easily discernible from later alterations. For instance, the jail is obviously not part of the original building block because of its diminutive size, dissimilar roof type, and differing exterior material. Similarly, the east side addition, although sheathed in matching metal siding, differs from the original building in fenestration rhythm, roof type, and even visible foundation level. With the basics of the building intact, the courthouse possesses its significant historic associations.

Manning has been Dunn County's seat since the 1908 organization of the county. When the first courthouse burned in 1914 county residents at Dunn Center agitated for county seat relocation. A narrow vote in the 1914 local election saw the issue defeated by only 47 votes out of 1381 votes cast (Dunn County News, November 5, 1914). Even with the mandate, Manning's continuing claim on the seat became tenuous as the state legislature passed a bill to encourage upgrading courthouse facilities. The bill allowed counties to vote on the issue of relocation every four years in counties where the building was worth less than \$15,000. To make the condition more volatile, only 51% of the vote was necessary to carry the election, as opposed to the former 2/3 majority (Dunn County News, February 18, 1915). This threatened counties west of the Missouri River, for only one county had a courthouse which eliminated the possibility of recurring election. Construction of the Dunn County courthouse in 1915 cost county tax payers \$5037 (Dunn County News, July 1, 1915).

Since 1915, official county documents have been stored and county offices have been maintained in the courthouse. Construction in 1960 of an office building in Killdeer, nine miles to the north, took court activities away from the Manning Courthouse. The action consequently opened the door for arguments concerning county seat relocation. Continually, the expense of a new courthouse has been cited as the major reason for abandoning plans for consolidating county offices in Killdeer (See, eg., Killdeer Herald, October 15, 1980, p. 4 and November 12, 1980, p. 1). Another factor, though, the seventy year survival of Manning's Courthouse, must also be considered a trend which has anchored the county seat in the same location despite the building's inadequacies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

"Commissioners May Build New Court House," Dunn County News, February 19, 1914, p. 1.

"Commissioners' Proceedings," Dunn County News, March 12, 1914, p. 1.

"Contract Was Let Tuesday," Dunn County News, July 1, 1915, p. 1.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

12 1985

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number Various

Page 22

"Court House is Accepted," Halliday Promoter, October 7, 1915, p. 1.

"Court House Work Began," Dunn County News, July 8, 1915, p. 1.

Interview with Mary Stroh, Dunn County Tax Agent, June 3, 1985.

Interview with Reinhardt Hauck, Dunn County Auditor, June 3, 1985.

Morrell, Clarissa, ed.,
Dauntless Dunn, n.p., 1970.

"New \$5,000 Court House," Dunn County News, June 10, 1915, p. 1.

"The New Court House," Halliday Promoter, September 30, 1915, p. 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

FEB 12 1986

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

23

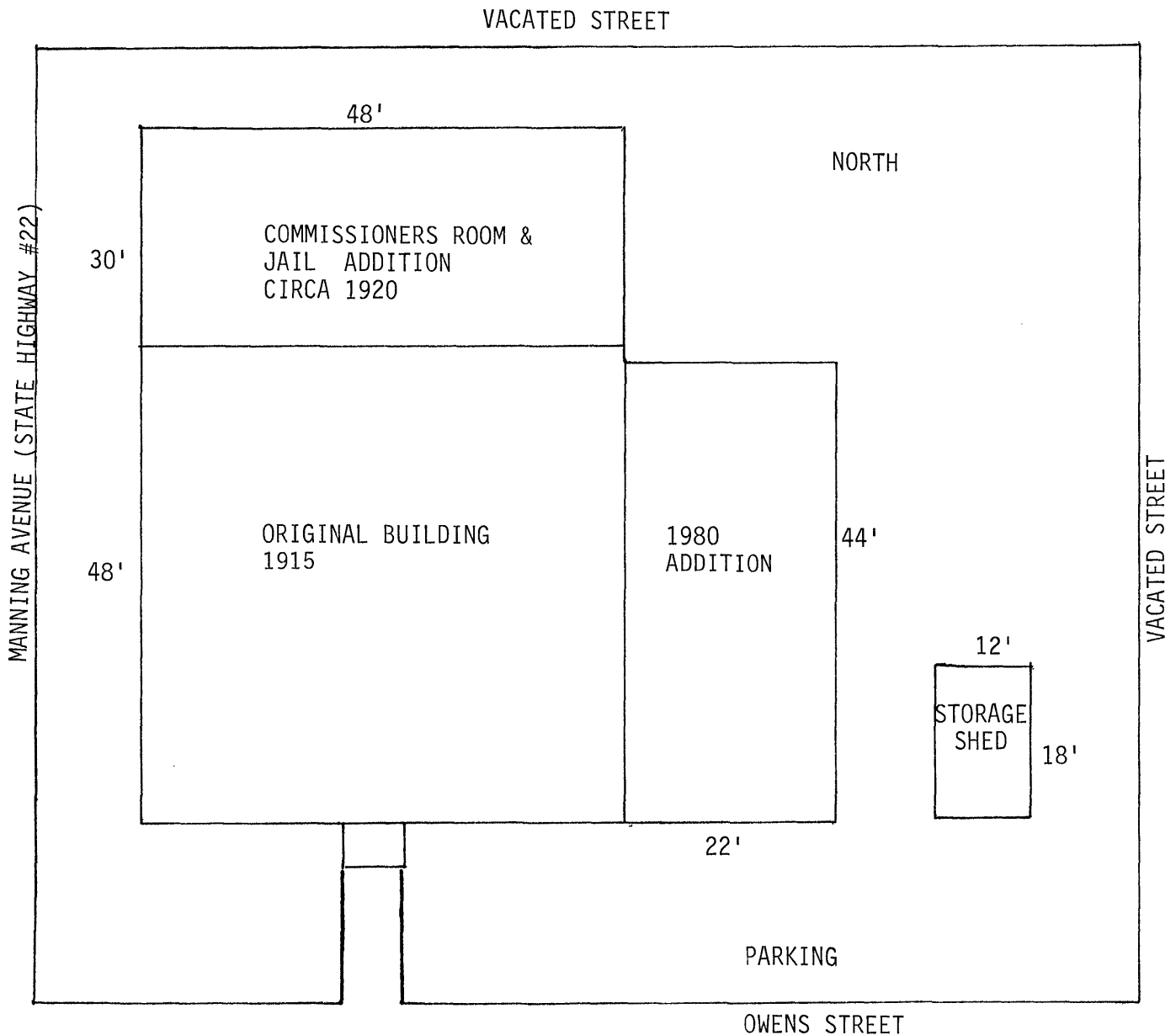


FIGURE 1
DUNN COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MANNING, NORTH DAKOTA
NOT TO SCALE
BLOCK IS 300' ON A SIDE